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PASSES

OR

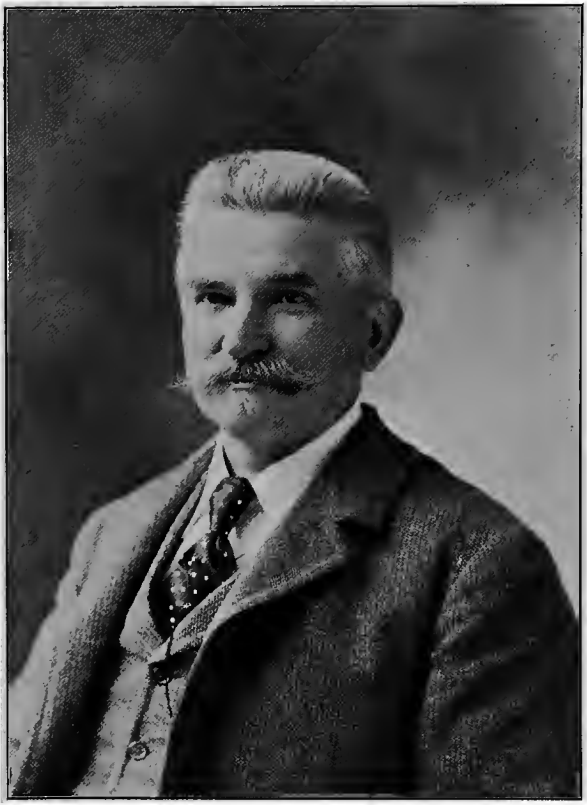
The Beauties of Transportation

BY

AUGUSTE FAURE

Chief Clerk to the President of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Co.

Passes



AUGUSTE FAURE

Passes

or

The Beauties of Transportation

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1900

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AUGUSTE FAURE

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PREFACE.

During an intercourse of twenty years with pass-solicitors, I have had occasion to gaze on many sides of human nature.

Being of an analytical turn of mind, I could not help forming opinions of my own, on what I saw and what I heard.

These opinions gradually ripened into arguments, and they, in turn, almost imperceptibly shaped themselves into chapters.

Before undertaking to prepare this book for publication, I consulted a gentleman whose patriotism was above par, and in whose wisdom I had implicit confidence.

He said it was a capital idea;

that the pass-privilege was greatly abused, and ought to be curtailed. But he warned me against the danger of mentioning names in connection with passes, or of making any allusions by which those who use them could recognize themselves, for fear they might be offended by it. In fact, he seemed to think I ought to write a book on passes, with the word "passes" left out.

I learned subsequently that he rode on a pass himself, and so did every member of his family.

I then thought the best way to feel the public pulse would be to deliver a lecture on the subject, and I prepared myself accordingly.

But as the day of trial drew near, I became a trifle nervous

about the result. I sought the society of a few trusted friends, in the hope that they would instill into me some confidence, courage and cheerfulness. They did the best they could.

One said he was afraid I would get "stuck." Another felt quite sure I would break down completely. A third said he would not be astonished if the price of eggs went up the day of the lecture; and a fourth had serious apprehensions that my delivery would stop all the railroads in the country.

The lecture came off in due time. I had confided to my friends that, as the subject was rather dry in itself, I would vary the monotony by saying something funny, now and then.

They promised to watch for it. They did. Unfortunately, their ideas of fun did not quite tally with mine, and they invariably laughed in the midst of my most pathetic periods.

However, none of their dire predictions came true; and the next morning, I had the satisfaction to see, by the papers, that the trains were still running—on time—as usual.

Being at last reasonably convinced that this little book of mine contains nothing subversive of good order and good government, I let it go forth, only bespeaking for it the kind indulgence of the American public.

A. F.

CHAPTER I.

A Nice Thing.

It is a nice thing to have a railroad pass in the family. It comes very handy, at times.

I hope, dear reader, you have at least one or two. If you have, I congratulate you. If you have not, I sympathize with you, and trust you may get one soon.

***

Everybody who tries does not always succeed in getting a pass. Some do; many don't. I believe I voice the sentiments of those who *don't*, when I say that the system in vogue at present, for

distributing passes, is all wrong. It should be corrected at once, so as to include everybody. Why not? Are we not all capable of appreciating a little favor like that? Of course we are. We all entertain a friendly feeling in our hearts for that magic bit of paper called a "pass." Whenever we get one, it is always welcome; indeed, in many cases it is pretty sure to fill a long-felt want.

A railroad pass is a fine invention, a great invention. It enables one to put on airs—cheap—over the plain people who pay their fare. It gratifies, at the same time, that natural desire, born in the human soul, to travel, to see the world, at any cost, and specially without cost.

I have been engaged, for many years, in the occupation of refusing passes to those who needed them most, and granting them to those who needed them least. That was not my fault. It was the fault of the system under which American railroads have been managed up to the present time.

I am aware that, in wishing everybody a pass, I am in danger of being misunderstood. Some may say I am courting the masses. But if I give expression to the opposite sentiment, others may say I am currying favor with the classes.

It is difficult to please everybody.

***

For a long time past, railroad managers have been complaining of low rates, yet they keep on giving free transportation right and left, to people who are abundantly able to pay their fare.

The millions of paying passengers, who travel on American railroads, complain of discrimination, yet they continue to pay their fare, right along, without a protest.

The majority of American railroads have gone through the straits of bankruptcy, during the last ten years. What has happened before may happen again.

A candid presentation of both sides of the question may prove interesting. Possibly, it may do some good. At least, I hope so.

The object is worth the effort. The people and the railroads may yet come to a satisfactory understanding.

"Il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte."

CHAPTER II.

Travel, the Best Educator.

Most people like to take a little trip now and then. I don't speak of those who are compelled to travel for a living, but of those who travel chiefly for pleasure. Some of them would go oftener, undoubtedly, if they had passes; and I know others who, for the same consideration, could easily arrange their affairs so as to make it perfectly convenient to be on the road most of the time.

That is very natural. They want to see, they want to learn; and travel is the best educator, after all. Modern civilization has no more powerful agent than travel.

The world is an open book. He who travels can read it for himself. He who stays at home must be satisfied with what others choose to tell him; and we know what unreliable story-tellers some travelers are. Americans do not need to be posted on that subject. They want to read the book for themselves and not by proxy.

***

Americans are the greatest people on earth, anyway. Everybody knows that; they even admit it themselves, in spite of their great native modesty. And if any one doubts it and wants to be enlightened on the subject, all he has to do is to knock the chip from their shoulder; he will find it out quick enough.

One of the chief reasons for the superiority of Americans over other people is that they travel more than other people. In the old world, people do not travel much, although they may think they do. The boundaries of their own states are so narrow, that, in many cases, if they start out in the morning, they are sure to run up against custom-house officers before noon, and to have to contend with unknown dialects, strange habits and all sorts of petty official annoyances, well calculated to discourage the most ardent tourist.

But here, in America, it is different. Here, everybody can travel; and, in point of fact, everybody does travel, more or less. Here, a mere child, a timid young girl, can start

out alone and travel for thousands and thousands of miles, with absolute security, with perfect comfort and even luxury, without changing cars, without having to stray away from under the protecting folds of the Stars and Stripes, and without even missing the familiar sights of every-day home life. A bright young lady from Milwaukee, of whom I inquired how she had enjoyed a trip to the Pacific coast, from which she had just returned, replied: "It was perfectly lovely. Wherever we went, we saw the advertisements of Milwaukee beer."

CHAPTER III.

Rates and Fares.

Of course, it costs money to travel, unless you are lucky enough to have a pass and dodge your hotel bill. Nevertheless, it will be readily admitted that railroad rates and fares are not nearly so high now as they were in the early days of railroading—nothing like it. They have been coming down almost constantly, and they have now reached a point where they cannot go down much lower, without vanishing entirely.

***

Railroads started out to do business for money; then they did

it for glory, and now they pay out millions of dollars every year for the privilege of doing it. That sounds strange, but it is true just the same.

***

People can travel from Boston to San Francisco to-day, for less money than it cost thirty years ago to go from New York to St. Louis. Besides, the trains run much faster, and the accommodations are infinitely better. No one thinks it necessary to make his will, any more, before starting out on a five hundred, or a thousand-mile journey.

***

It cannot be denied that railroad managers are still in the unfortunate habit of charging full rates

to the majority of travelers; but common fairness compels us, at the same time, to recognize the fact that they already carry a good many for half rates, and a good many more for nothing at all. Perhaps some day they will carry everybody for the same price. At least, let us hope so.

***

In spite of the equality of which we like to boast so much in this country, it is none the less a fact that the American people are divided into two classes: those who pay their fare, and those who ride free. And the latter invariably receive more consideration than the former. The conductor would not dare to slight them, for one thing, for fear they might be

friends of the General Manager; and they would not tolerate it, for another, for, if he should try it, they would promptly give him to understand that they are more or less closely related to the President, and that, if they chose to report him, they could make him lose his place inside of twenty-four hours.

***

These two classes are in turn subdivided into several other classes, each with its own attributes, charges or privileges, as the case may be. For instance, among the paying class, we find the man who pays full rates, the one who pays half rates, and the one who pays nominal rates only.

On the free list, we find a long

assortment of passes, which may be reduced to three general styles, namely: the trip pass, the time pass, and the annual pass. These three general styles of passes can again be subdivided into as many shades and varieties as there may be shades and degrees of influence required to procure each and every one of them. The fact is, the rules governing the issue of passes are so elastic and adjustable, that they can be made to fit every case separately and absolutely, whatever may be said to the contrary notwithstanding.

CHAPTER IV.

Prince, Pauper and Private Car.

Passes go by favor, like kissing. Both, however, can stand a good deal of coaxing, sometimes, before they come our way. In the matter of passes, coaxing alone is hardly sufficient. As a distinguished ward statesman once remarked to me, "Coaxing is all right, but a little *inflooence* goes a great deal further." In fact, one must have influence if he would have passes. Whether assumed, acquired, borrowed or stolen, influence is absolutely necessary. It is the principal consideration in the deal. No influence, no passes. Many

have passes this year who had none last year—influence. Many had passes last year who have none this year—influence gone. Many never had any passes and never will have any—lack of influence.

***

From the man who has a pass for a private car, down to the one who can only get a half-rate ticket on an emigrant train, it is always a question of influence.

If influence is necessary to procure passes, it is none the less so to retain them after you have once got them. The many thousands who ride on passes to-day throughout America are absolutely dependent, for the renewal or extension of those passes, on the amount of

influence which they can bring to bear, directly or indirectly, upon the respective presidents of the roads, or the officers of their staff.

***

In fact, it is not even necessary to be an officer on the staff of a railroad president, in order to have a retinue of worshipers after passes; because every employé in his office, from the janitor up, is sure to have a little shrine and a little court of his own.

In that respect, pass solicitors resemble very much another class of solicitors, of ancient times and other climes, who were also dependent for their privileges upon the favor of the King and the intrigues of his court. Indeed, the resemblance does not stop there, because

the free-pass system is fast introducing, into American society, a series of social distinctions, not at all unlike those obtaining under the old régime.

Let us cast a rapid glance at them.

***

Take, for instance, the man who always pays his fare, who never receives any favors, and never asks for any. That man represents, certainly, the large majority of the five or six hundred million passengers who travel annually on American railroads. He knows very well he is simply expected to pay, take whatever treatment is given him, and say nothing. That is his business, and it is astonishing how well he attends to it.

Now, follow up the whole length of the chain, if you like, link by link, and step by step, through the many different kinds of reduced-rate tickets, throughout the labyrinth of trip passes, quarterly passes, time passes, annual passes, until you come up to the top—to the man who has a pass good for himself, a party of his friends, and a private car, stocked with the best provisions the market affords, and tended by a suite of valets, cooks and flunkeys.

***

Look on that picture; then turn back and take a look at the other one. Begin again at the bottom of the ladder and follow up the social distinctions between the men of toil, the peasant, the serf, the yeo-

man, the squire, the page, the knight; pass then to the lord, the baron and baronet, the count, the viscount, and so on through the whole hierarchy, until you come to the marquis, the duke, the prince. Then, dear reader, see for yourself how much difference you can find between the aristocracy of ancient times and the aristocracy of the free pass and private car of to-day.

If there is any real difference, it is that no prince ever traveled in such royal style as your plain American citizen, who has enough *inflooence* with the railroads to compel them to extend to him the courtesy of a private car. He knows he can travel over one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles of first-class road, and back again,

if he likes. He knows that thirty-six thousand locomotives stand ready to haul that car, at a moment's notice, when their turn comes. He knows that nearly a million trained railroad men are on the *qui vive*, ready, night and day, to watch, with the greatest care, over the movements of that precious car and the comfort of its distinguished occupant.

Kings and emperors are not *in it* with him. They are always afraid of anarchists, nihilists, and the like. That is the least of his troubles. Just give him a private car, with the trimmings, and you could not stop him with anything short of an earthquake.

The only difference, of any account, between the old régime

and the new is that, in olden times, it took several generations to raise a full-fledged aristocracy, whereas this glorious country raises a fresh crop with every new election.

CHAPTER V.

Congress, the Old Guard.

It cannot be denied that the vast army of dead-heads, on American railroads, is recruited chiefly from the ranks of the politicians; and it is equally true that the old guard of that army is to be found right in the Congress of the United States.

***

A man wanted to run for Congress. His friends laughed at him and said: "What would you do to distinguish yourself in Congress, if you should ever get there?" He said: "I would move that all Congressmen surrender their rail-

road passes, and I would keep on making that motion until they did surrender them, or until my term expired."

***

Evidently, that man was just a trifle unreasonable. He should have been satisfied with simply requiring every Congressman to procure a pass, similar to his own, for every one of his constituents. That would be fair, it would be more democratic, and he would make many more friends that way than the other way. Besides, it would be so nice for a member of Congress to have his constituents come to Washington to pay him a visit, from time to time, (which they could do very well, if they had passes). They could

come in groups, or they could come all together, or they could come one or two at a time, so as to bring him fresh news from home almost every day. They could hear him make fine speeches in Congress, and he, in turn, could get them all government positions. Would not that be nice? If, perchance, some of them failed to get the particular position they wanted, or to get any position at all, they could, at least, with their passes, ride back home without having to count the ties.

***

It is clear that if a pass is a good thing for a Congressman, it should be just as good for his constituents. Of course, if a pass is a bad thing in itself, it should

not be given to either, at least not to members of Congress, because they are not in need of anything bad.

***

I once had a long discussion with a Congressman who wanted me to get him some passes. I said to him: "Don't you know that it is against the law of the land to give passes?" That did not seem to worry him much, and I added: "Not only is it against the law of the land, but, in my humble opinion, to give passes to members of Congress is against the law of God."

He said: "Oh! well, you know, God has nothing to do with Congress, anyway."

"But," said I, "giving a pass to

a Congressman, and none to his constituents, is a clear case of discrimination; and if there is one thing more galling than another, to the average mortal, it is to be discriminated against. As we look through history, we find that unjust discrimination has always been the primary cause of all great revolutions."

He said: "I guess you are right about that; but let me tell you that members of Congress are themselves the very first victims of discrimination at the hands of the railroads. If ever there was a set of men discriminated against, in the matter of passes, it is certainly the members of the House and of the Senate; and if they should start a first-class revolu-

tion one of these days, I would not be surprised at all." He said: "I know it for a fact, that no two of them are treated exactly alike in regard to passes. One is given a pass good for himself, his wife and his whole family, while another is given a pass good for himself alone, as if he was not expected to have any wife or any family.

"One receives more annual passes than he can ever expect to make use of. Another does not begin to get the half of those he asks for, and he is actually compelled to humiliate himself, before the pass clerk, by asking for an occasional trip pass, like any ordinary beggar."

Then he proceeded to relate to

me what he claimed had been his own individual experience. He said: "I wrote a letter to the president of a big railroad, asking him to send me a trip pass for myself and my wife. And some clerk in his office had the cheek to answer me that, under the rules of his company, they could not issue passes to ladies. But this young man condescended to add that they would be very glad to give me one for myself alone.

"Well," said he, "what could I do? I took the pass for myself, and then I went and bought a ticket for my wife. And when we got on the train, I met a brother Congressman who pulled out a pass good for himself, his wife, his two daughters and a servant.

Oh! I was mad enough myself, but that was nothing compared to my wife. She said she only wished that president was on the train, so that she could give him a piece of her mind."

"Well," said I, "what did you do?"

"Oh," he said, "I got even with him!"

"How?"

"When I reached home, I sat down and I wrote a long letter to a mutual friend, giving him all the particulars of the case, and I know that he sent my letter to the president of the railroad, so that the latter knows exactly what I think of him."

"Well," said I, "you remind me of that nice young man, who went

to pay a visit to his best girl, and found her enjoying the society of another nice young man. He was very mad. He left the house, furious. He met a mutual friend on the street, and told him his trouble. The friend said: 'What did you do?' He said: 'I showed them by the way I shut the door that I didn't like it.'"

***

In the course of a conversation with a prominent railroad man from the west, he informed me that three-fourths of the correspondence in his office was about passes. And he made the remark then that it would be a good thing if all the letters written by members of Congress, and public men generally, about passes, could be

collected in book-form and published to the world. He thought they would make mighty interesting reading for the American people.

I, being a timid man by nature, was horrified at his proposition. I said: "But, my dear sir, if you were to publish the letters of those gentlemen, you might make them blush like little girls."

He answered: "If they did not blush, I believe the whole country would blush for them."

CHAPTER VI.

Johnny, Get Your Gun.

Why do railroads give passes to politicians, anyway? During the many years of my experience, in the pass business, I have never been able to discover one single good reason for it, except that when a man is elected to Congress, or to the State Legislature, or to the City Council, or to any other important public office, railroad presidents and managers instinctively scent danger in the air, all at once. They are actually afraid. It is not their fault. They can't help it. Self-protection is the first law of nature; they simply obey it.

They try to get themselves in position to ward off any blows that may come to them through the new men in power. They are anxious to get on the right side of the new political aristocracy. They want to conciliate them, disarm them in advance, make friends of them, put them under obligation; and, with that object in view, they promptly send for their special agent, and they say to him: "Johnny, get your gun, get your gun."

***

They shoot off a pass to each new honorable gentleman. They enclose it to him in a nice little letter, in which they hope he may find it convenient and agreeable to sometimes make use of it. And of

course he does—no trouble about that. In fact, if the railroads should be a little slow in sending it to him, he is not at all backward in asking for it himself.

***

Electing a man to office does not, necessarily, give him all the privileges in the world ; no, but it gives him a few. That is enough. He takes the others.

***

When the railroads get a letter from a man who has been recently elected to a political office, they know what is in it, they do not need to open it. He wants a pass.

***

Sometimes a green politician will beat around the bush, and pretend to carry on a little flirtation with

the railroads, before he comes down to business, but that is only because he is green. He would like to convey the impression that he is shy, and that his virtue is easily scared. He would appreciate being coaxed, and being led gently into temptation, before he condescends to fall.

But the majority go straight to the point. They are fully prepared to fall. They expect to fall. They would be greatly disappointed if they should be deprived of the opportunity of falling. They would rather fall than not; in fact, they would rather fall a dozen times than not fall at all.

***

If any one asks who is the most to blame, the railroads for offer-

ing the passes, or the honorable gentlemen for accepting them, I think it is six of the one and half a dozen of the other.

***

Sometimes the railroad people may want to make use of a certain politician. They give him a pass to propitiate him. Then they wink one eye. They feel sure they have placed that politician under great obligation. He winks the other eye, because he is equally certain he is *buncoing* them out of so much transportation.

***

Again, sometimes a politician may get a lot of passes from the railroads, for some reason or other. He goes away full of glee. He laughs in his sleeve. In his vanity

and conceit, he imagines they gave them to him because they are afraid of him, or on account of his great importance. Then the railroad people wink both eyes, because they had been waiting for just such an opportunity to buy that man at his own price—and it is not much of a price either.

***

The great trouble is that there is always so much mystery surrounding the dealings between the politicians and the railroads, that you can never tell exactly which one is being swindled the worst of the two. My own experience is that the railroads manage to get the worst of it about three-fourths of the time, at least.

***

When they give a pass to a poor man or a poor woman, they do an act of charity, they expect nothing for it; that ends it.

***

When they give a pass to a minister of the gospel, or a member of some religious congregation, they expect to get their reward in heaven; and I hope they will. That is in the sweet by-and-by; they can afford to wait.

***

When they give a pass to a business man, a merchant, a shipper or a manufacturer, it is because they hope thereby to get some of his business over the road; and they usually get it, at least a share of it.

***

When they give a pass to a newspaper man, it is because they expect to get a little advertising in return, perhaps a flattering personal notice; and they never have to wait long for that either.

***

But, when they give a pass to a politician, they simply invest in a sinking fund, without any bottom to it. The majority of politicians, who ride on free passes, do not contribute enough to the revenues of the railroads to pay for the wind that goes into the air-brakes. If any politician thinks that railroads can pay dividends by giving him free passes, it only shows that his arithmetic is sadly out of order.

CHAPTER VII.

Who Pays for Dead-heads?

If the railroads want to make friends, why don't they pass all the ladies free? I would rather have the good-will of the ladies than that of all the politicians in the world. That would not only please the ladies, and secure their good-will, but it would vindicate the reputation of Americans for chivalry and courtesy to the fair sex. As matters stand now, that reputation is not well maintained at all, because everybody knows that it is much more difficult to obtain a pass for a lady than for a gentleman.

***

If the railroads want to make friends with the coming generation, why don't they give passes to brides and grooms starting out on their wedding trips? It should be an easy matter to issue marriage certificates with mileage coupons attached. That would undoubtedly induce many young men to get married, who are now holding off, because of the expense of a wedding trip.

***

If the railroads want to cultivate popularity with the brawn and muscle of the country, why don't they give passes to all baseball rooters? I am sure the rooters would appreciate it; they would root for the railroads, as they never rooted before for their home team.

If railroad managers want to become popular with their stockholders, why don't they give each of them a pass? That would be considerably more than many of them have been getting out of their investment for some years past. It has been more fashionable of late for stockholders to be saddled with an assessment than with a dividend.

***

If railroad managers want to show their patriotism, why don't they pass the soldiers and the sailors free, instead of the politicians? The former do the fighting, the latter only do the talking.

I only mention these few instances to call attention to the fact that the railroads could easily

invest their passes with far better prospects for a return, than by throwing them away on the politicians.

***

A railroad pass is unquestionably a very important factor in the race for civilization. If Congressmen have passes, and their constituents have none, it is clear that the constituents do not stand a very good chance in that race. They are too much handicapped; they are beaten before they start.

***

Some people may say that railroads have a perfect right to give passes to whom they please, and that it is nobody's business but their own.

I am not so sure about that. I

know that, for my part, I have frequently listened to speeches, before election, when the speakers tried their very best to make me believe that "the people, sir, have something to say about the management of the railroads."

Of course, that is before election, if you like. After election, it is different. At least, it is well known that while some of the more radical ones may still be quite ready to throw stones at the railroads with one hand, they are equally ready to take passes from them with the other.

***

I have heard it said that, in giving passes to politicians, the railroads are doing no injustice to any one, because it costs no more

to haul a car with a few dead-heads in it, than to haul it with them left out. Oh! very well; if it does not cost anything, why not carry everybody *dead-head?*

***

But of course it does cost something. It costs just as much to carry a dead-head as to carry a live one; and the only question is, Who pays for it?

The railroads do not pay for it. The railroads have no money except what they derive from the people. The paying passenger pays for the dead-head. When a man, who has paid full rates for his ticket, sees a well-known politician pull out a pass good for himself, his wife, his daughter, or his sister, that man knows very

well he has been taxed to help give those people a free ride. No one can blame him, if he should not like it. He may be a sensitive man (most people would be under the circumstances), or he may object to the drain on his pocket-book, to say nothing of the wear and tear to his feelings. If every time he buys a ticket he must help pay for some one else besides himself, perhaps he would like the privilege of selecting his own company.

CHAPTER VIII.

Who Pays for Running the Trains?

From what precedes, some people might think that I am prejudiced against politicians in general, and Congressmen in particular; but I am not. On the contrary, no one is more ready than myself to admit that some of the greatest leaders of men—orators, statesmen, soldiers and patriots—have sprung from the ranks of the politicians.

Everybody knows that the science of real politics is the greatest of all sciences, because, more than any other, it tends to shape the destinies of nations and their governments.

Nor is it at all strange, or in any way remarkable, that members of Congress should ride on free passes. The wonder is, rather, that they don't all ride in private cars. If they ride on passes, it is not altogether their fault; they are to some extent the victims of circumstances. The trouble with them is that, no matter how much they may be victimized in that direction, they are always ready to be victimized some more.

***

But no one will deny that the politicians, as a rule, are all good fellows—generous, liberal, kind-hearted—specially just before election. They have never been known to be particularly opposed to anybody else having some of

the good things of this world, if there are any left after they are served; and if every one of their constituents should manage to ride free on the railroads, after they have been well provided with passes themselves, they would not object.

The railroads might object, however. The railroads might say: "If everybody rides free, who is going to pay for running the trains?" Too bad! Some people never think of that.

***

A young colored fellow wanted me to give him a pass between Baltimore and Washington—a time pass, too. I asked him if he knew of any good reason why the railroad should give him a

pass. He said: "Well, boss, I am courting a young colored lady, down in Washington, an' it am powerful 'spensive to go back and forth all the time."

That coon never thought of the expense of running the trains.

***

A tramp asked me for a pass to New York. He had so much assurance that at first I took him for a Congressman in disguise. But, as he could not give a satisfactory account of himself, of course he did not get the pass. He seemed to be very much put out. He said that my refusal to give him a pass upset all his arrangements. Think of it! That tramp had actually gone and made arrangements, and then re-

lied on the railroad to carry them out, regardless of expense.

***

One day I met a man with whom I had a slight acquaintance. He had just been elected to the City Council by accident. I proceeded to congratulate him, but he did not give me time. His first words were: "How soon am I going to get my annual pass? I want to use it right away."

***

A man came into my office one day with a face a yard long, all put on for the occasion. He said: "I am mad; I am hot!" I said: "What is the matter?" He said: "A friend of mine went to my house a few days ago, and asked my boy for my pass. The boy

gave it to him, and now he has gone and lost it; and I want you to give me another." His pass was in my desk at that very moment. It had been taken up on the train, five days before, for being presented by the wrong party. He had loaned it to that party himself, and the conductor said in his report that it was not the first time, either.

In the light of such facts as these, it is not at all surprising that some of the large railroads of the country should have found it absolutely necessary to require the photographs of a certain class of politicians to be affixed to passes issued to them, for identification on presentation.

One of them said to me he was

willing enough to give any other evidence of his identity, but he strenuously objected to the pictorial part of it. On being asked his reason for it, he said it looked too much like being placed in the "rogue's gallery."

***

A pass beggar came very near getting me into trouble on one occasion. He had worried me persistently for several days, and I had as persistently turned him down. Finally, he came in one day when the office was full of people, and the President himself was in the room conversing with a party of distinguished visitors.

"Won't you give me a pass over the Baltimore and Ohio?" said he.

"Why should I give you one?" said I.

"Don't you have a pass yourself over the B. & O.?" he went on.

I was somewhat staggered by the fellow's impudence, but I answered: "I am in the employ of the B. & O. R. R., and they give me a pass because I have to travel over the road sometimes on business of the company."

"And what do you do when you travel for pleasure?" he persisted.

I promptly drew myself up with much dignity, and with a deep inward assurance that this time, at last, I was going to crush him forever, I said: "Sir, I never travel for pleasure on the B. & O."

The President looked at me over his spectacles, with great solem-

nity. The visitors opened their eyes, as if wondering what it all meant. The clerks giggled. The colored porter grinned. And I looked foolish and felt myself blush clear to the tips of my ears. But I held my ground, and the man went away disgusted.

"And he never came back any more."

***

A public official was accosted one day by one of his political henchmen, who wanted to borrow his pass. The official said: "Billy, I am very sorry; I would like very much to oblige you, but really I can't do it, because my pass has my photograph on it. Now, you and I don't look at all alike. I am smooth-shaven, and

you wear a big, heavy mustache." Billy answered: "Lend me the pass, anyway; I will go and have my mustache shaved off."

CHAPTER IX.

Wanted: Minimum Rate.

Of course, if the railroads object to carrying everybody dead-head, it is clear that some must pay if others are to ride free. The only question is, Who is going to pay?

***

As Congressmen have been riding free for so many years, I think it is about time for them to pay their fares and give their constituents a chance.

For instance, they might turn their passes over to their constituents altogether, provided the railroads consented to the transaction, of course. Or they might arrange

to take turn and turn about. At any rate, there would be no harm in trying it, for a year or so, just to see how it works. If it works well, they could keep it up a few years longer.

Fair exchange is no robbery.

***

But perhaps some Congressmen would object to an exchange of that kind. People soon get used to a good thing. When a man has once ridden on a pass, he never wants to pay his fare any more. Perhaps they might be afraid that their constituents would imperceptibly develop such a strong affection for free passes, that they could not easily be induced to part with them afterwards. They know how it is themselves.

A little reflection should, however, convince them that their fears are groundless, because if the constituents refused to surrender their passes at the appointed time, Congressmen have the power to compel them to do so. It would only be necessary for them to open the Statute Book, turn to the Interstate Commerce Act, and point out to their constituents the clause that says that it is unlawful to ride on free passes, unless you are in the employ of the railroad. It is illegal, it is forbidden, it is prohibited in the strongest terms known in the English language.

***

As the masses of the constituents are known to be good, law-

abiding citizens, it is surmised that they could not withstand such an argument as that, unless they should suddenly take it into their heads to ask a few questions themselves. There is no telling. More unseemly things than that have happened. Everything is possible. They might turn round and become inquisitive all at once. They might want information on the following points, for instance:

"Who made that Interstate Law?

"How long has it been in existence? If binding on one, why not on the other?

"Are the constituents alone subject to it?

"Are Congressmen exempt from it?

"By what right are the constitu-

ents made to pay, when their representatives ride free?

"Are Congressmen made of better clay than their constituents?

"Are legislators like doctors, who never take their own medicine?

"Did Congress enact that law for the good of the whole people, or for the special benefit of the politicians?

"Is the fact of being a politician a sufficient excuse for breaking the law, or a sufficient recommendation for obtaining passes?"

***

They might ask all those questions and a great many others besides.

And it would do no good to try to put them off with excuses.

Getting around the law by call-

ing a politician a "special agent" of the railroad, in order to give him a pass, would not work in this case, because the constituents would want to know why they could not *all* be called special agents just as well.

***

If the constituents ever get started on an investigation of that kind, there is no telling how far they will go, or where they will stop.

The probabilities are they will not be satisfied until they reach the bottom. They will have their rights, or know the reason why.

They will contend, with good reason, that the law should be the same for everybody; and if they must pay, they will insist

on paying no more than anybody else. They will demand free transportation for all, or a minimum rate, the same for everybody and low enough to be within the reach of everybody, including members of Congress—say, for instance, two cents a mile.

***

I do not pretend that two cents a mile would be a proper rate under all conditions and circumstances. Perhaps it should be more; perhaps it might be less. I only mention it by way of illustration. But, whatever it might be, once that uniform minimum rate is established, the people will demand its enforcement for all alike. Ah! there is the rub; that is the most difficult part of it.

***

American railroads have entered into agreements, as numerous as the stars in heaven, for the maintenance of rates, but they have almost invariably broken them.

Railroad officers have been in the habit of signing a rate agreement very much as a toper signs the pledge, that is, to break it at the first opportunity. And the cutting of rates has not all been done by minor officials either, but by bigger ones as well.

***

A story is told of a local agent on a certain railroad, who was convicted of cutting passenger rates. Under the rules of the Passenger Association, in force at the time, the penalty for the offense was dismissal. They had to

dismiss him. They dismissed him as local agent, and they immediately appointed him General Passenger Agent of that same road; and things went on as before, only a great deal worse. It was not long before he was brought up again before the Association on a similar charge. The chairman said to him: "When you were local agent, you were discharged for cutting rates. Now that you are General Passenger Agent, you cut them worse than ever. How do you account for it?"

He promptly replied: "Bigger place!"

CHAPTER X.

Transportation and Postage Stamps.

It should not be an impossibility to maintain just and uniform rates on the railroads.

They do not seem to have any difficulty in the postoffice to maintain uniform rates on postage stamps.

Some people may say that the situation is not the same, and that there is no occasion for competition in the sale of postage stamps. Let us see.

There are, in round numbers, in the United States, eleven hundred operating railroad companies engaged in the sale of railroad

tickets. There are seventy thousand postoffices engaged in the sale of postage stamps. Surely there is a field for competition, if ever there was one.

If any one of those seventy thousand postmasters should advertise a bargain-counter sale of two-cent stamps for a cent a-piece, I would not be surprised if some of the gold hunters, now in the Klondike, should hurry back to the States to get a chance at that counter.

***

It is not the lack of incentive or opportunity that prevents postmasters from cutting the price of postage stamps; it is because they know very well it would not be good for their health to do so.

If the ticket-sellers and ticket-punchers were placed under the same rules and restrictions as the stamp-sellers and stamp-cancellers, it would be just as easy to maintain rates on the railroads as it is to maintain them in the postoffice.

***

As an illustration, let us suppose that the regularly appointed ticket agent is the only person authorized to issue transportation tickets of any and all kinds; that he is under oath and under bond to the United States Government, and that the penalty for selling tickets at other than regular rates is summary dismissal, forfeiture of his bond, and perhaps a term in jail.

Let us suppose, further, that the

passenger conductor is also under oath and under bond to the United States Government, and that the penalty for passing any one on his train, who is not provided with the regular ticket, is instant dismissal, forfeiture of his bond, and a term in the penitentiary; and I venture to predict that railroad presidents would be surprised to see how easy it would be to maintain passenger rates on their respective roads.

***

People could then travel over any railroad and to any point in the United States, for two cents a mile, if that were the established rate, just as a letter is now carried to any point in the country for two cents an ounce.

No one would waste his valuable time running after rebates or free passes, any more than they waste time now running after rebates on postage stamps.

Some people lose enough time now, running after passes, to walk to their destination and back again, and they are usually the ones who never get any passes.

***

If any one should go to a postmaster and ask him for the free gift of a few hundred dollars' worth of postage stamps, the postmaster would wonder if that man took him for an idiot, and he would promptly order him out, or call in a policeman. And yet many men, who are both highly intelligent and respectable, think noth-

ing of asking the railroads for free passes, representing many thousands of dollars in the aggregate, during the course of a year.

***

The business man who writes a large number of letters every day, and pays two cents apiece to send them off, would feel pretty bad if he had reason to suspect that his competitor in business gets his letters carried for nothing by the Government.

***

The sale of transportation should be regulated like the sale of postage stamps. It should be no more and no less to one person than to another, but should be the same to all alike, under like conditions.

There should be a minimum price established per mile.

Everybody should be entitled to transportation, in the ordinary passenger coach, on payment of that minimum price.

***

If any road should allow to any one a lower price than the established rate, then that lower price should become, *ipso facto*, the standard rate for that road, and all passengers having paid the full rate should be entitled to recover the difference. The guilty road should be punished by a heavy fine besides.

***

The establishment of a minimum rate does not mean that a passenger would be compelled to

limit himself to the accommodations provided under that rate. He could expend as much more in that direction as he saw fit. Say, for instance, that the minimum fare entitles him to travel in a first-class coach at two cents per mile; he is not obliged to travel in that coach if there is a parlor car in the train, and he has the means to buy a seat therein. After he has paid his two cents per mile, he is at liberty to pay as much more as he pleases for a seat or a berth in a Pullman car. He is welcome to hire a full section, or the whole car, for that matter. And if that car is not good enough, he can have one built to suit himself.

***

But the ordinary passenger wants to feel certain that the man who flies about in a private car has paid his fare of two cents a mile, like himself, for the right to travel at all on that train. He wants to know that, while he himself pays the full legal fare in the ordinary day coach, the other man is not sailing around in a private car for nothing.

CHAPTER XI.

Chromos and Free Lunches.

I have heard some people say that a minimum uniform rate can never be adopted by American railroads. The reason they give is that, while a low uniform rate might prove profitable enough for those roads running through thickly-settled centres of population, it would not do for the roads running through sparsely-settled sections of the country, and would inevitably throw them into bankruptcy.

***

Ah, yes, bankruptcy! There are a few railroads in bankruptcy

now, a good many others have been there before—some of them quite recently—and it was not for maintaining uniform rates either.

***

I have heard other people say that the adoption of a uniform rate would destroy competition. But that does not follow necessarily. Railroads could still compete to their hearts' content, by making faster time; by providing better accommodations; by giving chromos, free lunches, etc. Some might go for the chromos; some would probably go for the free lunch; and everybody would be happy.

***

In fact, the railroads would be the very first to be benefited.

The railroads need some sympathy, too, but nobody pities them; nobody cares for them.

The manager of a large hotel was conversing with a guest. The guest said: "How is business?"

"Bad," said the hotel man.

"What is the cause?" said the guest.

"The railroads," answered the manager. "The rates are too high. If the railroads would reduce their rates twenty-five or fifty per cent. they would carry many more people, and they would make up in the number what they would lose by the reduction—seeing that they have to run their trains anyway."

"Well," said the guest, "it is a bad rule that don't work both

ways. If all the hotels in the country would reduce their rates twenty-five or fifty per cent. they would entertain many more guests, and they would make up in the number what they might lose by the reduction—seeing that they have to keep open anyway."

That manager was mad, instantly. He said: "Sir, I want you to understand that this is a respectable house."

***

The experiment of uniform rates for the railroads has never been tried in this country; therefore it is too early to condemn it. It will be time enough to do that after it has proved a failure. All the old methods have been tried, and they have failed. New ones are

in order. In fact, any plan is worthy of consideration that is based on good faith, honesty and public morality.

***

I believe members of Congress should be entitled to ride free on the railroads, but I do not think the railroads should be expected to bear the entire expense, especially in view of the fact that the Government already allows members of Congress so much per mile for their traveling expenses. If any of them ever failed to collect it, I never heard of it.

But I have heard of some instances where passes, issued in the names of members of Congress, had found their way into the hands of ticket-scalpers, who sold

them to the public for cash. How in the world those passes ever got there, I have not the least idea; indeed I haven't.

CHAPTER XII.

Keep Off the Grass.

When I announced my purpose to deliver a public lecture on "Passes," several very respectable persons were good enough to say to me: "Look out, young man; you are going to stir up a hornets' nest, and the first thing you know you will get yourself into trouble."

***

That is very kind advice, and it is highly appreciated. But there is nothing new or original about it. Ever since the world began, every time some one has hinted at correcting an abuse, there have

been plenty of interested parties to shout to him:

"Keep off the grass!"

***

Whenever any one has the courage to propose to right a wrong, there are always plenty of well-meaning but timorous souls to whisper in his ear:

"Beware of the dog!"

***

Yet, truth is truth, and facts are facts, and neither can be downed forever. They may be kept down for a time, but sooner or later they are bound to come to light, all efforts to the contrary notwithstanding.

***

There are certain facts in connection with the railroads, which

it would be well not to lose sight of, because they not only affect the passing interests of the American people, but they threaten the permanent form of the American Government.

***

No one can have so soon forgotten the effects of the terrible crisis through which this country passed between the years 1893 and 1897. Every one remembers what a feeling of unrest and insecurity it created; how it alarmed trade, crippled industry, emptied the shops and the factories, filled the highways with tramps, and spread despondency and gloom all over the land.

***

Everybody remembers that during the great Chicago strike, the

"chariot of civilization and progress" (as the locomotive is sometimes called) was received by the strikers with anything but cheers. It was received with curses. It was met with bricks and stones and showers of bullets.

And yet the railroads have become a necessity for America. If any one doubts it, let him picture to himself what would become of this country should the railroads be suddenly stopped, destroyed or abolished. The railroad has had more to do with adding stars to the American flag than any other agency in the world.

***

If ever the American people become satisfied that they are treated fairly, and that they are

no longer discriminated against by the railroads, a strike of that kind will become an impossibility.

The people would soon take a personal, as well as a national, interest in the welfare of the railroad; they would resent an attack upon it, and they would rush to its rescue, just as they would rush to the rescue of the flag, if it were threatened.

***

For the present it does not appear that a majority of them are tumbling over one another to show their eagerness in that direction. No! And they are not apt to do so as long as they are compelled to pay full fare, while a few privileged ones are permitted to ride free.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CRIME OF THE AGE.

THE free pass is the curse of American railroads; it is at the root of all their troubles. Cut it out, and there is some hope of saving them. Leave it to grow and expand indefinitely, and demoralization and bankruptcy are sure to come in the future, as they have come in the past.

***

It matters little how the free pass was first introduced on the railroads. It is there. It was easier to introduce it than it will be to eradicate it. Like the proverbial drop of water, it did not

make much impression at first; but, in the course of time, it got in its work just the same.

***

It seemed very natural, in the beginning, for a railroad manager to extend the courtesy of an occasional trip pass to a patron of the road. There was no harm in that, apparently. But by-and-by that same patron began to look for that pass, then he expected it, next he requested it, and finally he exacted it.

The harm grew rapidly when shippers ceased to find trip passes good enough for them, and insisted, first on quarterly passes, and then on annual passes, under penalty of turning their shipments over to other roads, if their re-

quests were not granted. It reached its climax, when even annual passes proved insufficient to restrain them from carrying out their threat, and secret rates or rebates had to be resorted to.

***

The business world was startled a few years ago, by the expert who examined the accounts of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé Railroad. He found that in three years and a half that road had paid back, in secret rebates to privileged shippers, the enormous sum of three million nine hundred and six thousand six hundred and fifty-six dollars ($3,906,656), or more than a million dollars a year.

And the worst of it is that the case of the Santa Fé road is far

from being an exceptional one. For many years past, it has been an open secret that the railroads have been collecting the freight with one hand, and paying a big share of it back, with the other, to a few privileged shippers, in the shape of secret rebates. No wonder so many of them have failed!

***

The practice of paying secret rebates to favored shippers is the greatest crime of the last quarter of the century. It is discrimination in its most abhorrent and revolutionary form. It puts all the small shippers in the country at the mercy of a few big ones. It absorbs their honest profits. It takes the bread from their mouths.

It virtually forces them out of the business. To compete on equal, open terms, would be hard enough; but when they have to contend with secret allowances, the exact extent of which they are unable to gauge or ascertain, there is nothing left for them to do but shut up shop or starve.

***

The responsibility for that crime does not rest altogether upon the shoulders of railroad managers, although they are responsible for a large share of it, and they have long been put under the ban for it, by demagogues in quest of popularity.

Railroad managers made the mistake of opening the door. The flood rushed in with such a force

that now they seem powerless to shut it again. Every effort to stem the tide seems to leave them weaker and weaker, and to carry them farther and farther away from the shore.

***

In the meantime, American railroads have become a national grindstone, upon which all the cranks, grumblers and fault-finders love to sharpen the edge of their individual grievances.

American railroad men have been made scape-goats for the sins of the whole country, as if they had not enough of their own to carry. And it avails them nothing to attempt to disculpate themselves. If they talk back, the demagogues are not slow to pro-

claim that "where there is so much smoke, there must be some fire." If they keep quiet, it is given out that "guilty conscience needs no accuser." Whether they talk back, or whether they remain silent, railroad men are sure to be damned just the same. The Good Book says it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven; but that is nothing to what railroad men will have to go through to get there, if one half of what they are charged with is true.

***

Yet, close observers fail to find any special difference between American railroad men and any other body of men. In fact, any

other country but America would be sure to point to them with pride. Here, they are looked upon as suspects, and they are treated as public enemies. This is so true, that no public man, who has any regard for his own reputation, would care to stand up and raise his voice in their behalf. No politician running for office would care to be seen walking down the public street, arm in arm with a big railroad president. If he did, he would not get many votes, and he would be sure to create a sensation besides. People would say that the one had gotten into bad company, and the other ought to be ashamed of himself.

***

However, there are signs in the air that the cry of the demagogue, against railroad bondholders and stockholders is losing much of its force, since the recent period of railroad bankruptcy and reorganization.

It is beginning to dawn on the minds of the people at large, that railroad directors are not all thieves, that politicians are not all saints.

Because a few men have made colossal fortunes in the manipulation of railroad stocks, it does not follow that all the others are dishonest. This is a country of great possibilities. Large fortunes have been made in all branches of industry, including politics. The question, in regard to railroad

stocks and bonds, is not how many rascals have made fortunes out of them, but how many honest people have their living tied up in them.

CHAPTER XIV.

Legalize the Passes.

The only way to circumvent the pass evil is to legalize it.

Public servants should be entitled to ride free on the railroads, under proper rules and restrictions.

They should be provided with mileage-books, bearing their signatures and their photographs, and containing a duly authenticated certificate, stating their rank and position, and reciting the statute under which they are entitled to the railroad franchise, the territory covered by said franchise, the date of its expiration, etc.

That mileage-book, when presented by its real owner, should be honored on any railroad within the territory specified in it. Each conductor would detach from it the coupons representing the number of miles traveled on his own road. Those coupons should be redeemable on presentation, and at one-half of the regular rates, at the head office of the public department where such servant is employed.

***

For instance, the mileage-coupons collected from members of Congress and all public servants in the employ of the United States should be redeemable at the United States Treasury.

The mileage-coupons collected

from the officers and employés of any State should be redeemable at the State Treasury.

The mileage-coupons collected from county and city officials should be redeemable at the county and city treasury respectively; and so on to the end of the line.

***

As to members of religious or charitable bodies, and those connected with institutions of public utility, they should be granted the right to procure mileage-books at half rates, and those books should be good until used on any and all railroads in the country.

***

With regard to railroad employés, their cards of travel should

be strictly limited to the road that employs them, and should be made so plain that no one, not actually on the pay-rolls of the company, could parade himself on a pass as a "special agent," for example. That title should be abolished forever.

Exchange passes between different railroads should be discontinued. When a railroad man gets off his own road and on to another, he should pay his fare like anybody else.

***

In a word, no dead-heads should be allowed on the railroads. In that manner, no one would have occasion to complain, because no one would be deceived, injured, or discriminated against, and the rail-

roads would, in all cases, receive fair compensation for their work.

***

I would make only one exception to that rule, and that would be in favor of the President of the United States.

The President should be provided, at public expense, with a Presidential train that would eclipse anything that has ever been built in that line, and that train should be given the right of way over all the railroads in America.

This is a big country. The people would like to see their President from time to time, and they cannot all go to Washington for that purpose.

The President himself is tied to

the White House, because if he goes away, he is bound to place himself under obligation to one railroad or another, since they would not accept money from him, but consider themselves well paid by the honor of carrying him.

***

Railroad officers have their special cars constructed with such a degree of perfection and comfort that they can both live and work in them; and they transact business, dictate letters, send off telegrams, and hold important conferences in their special cars, at a speed of forty, fifty or sixty miles an hour, just as they would in their own private office.

***

The President should be provided with every facility contrived by American genius and invention, to allow him to come in contact with the people, and to permit him, at the same time, to transact public business with convenience and dispatch.

There is no danger of imperialism ever invading the White House through that door. On the contrary, if the people could ever realize that they are guaranteed the full enjoyment of their legal rights on the railroads, they would be only too proud and too happy to contribute a small mite of them for the benefit of their President. And the President could then travel free, not by the favor of the railroads, but by the grace of the American people.

CHAPTER XV.

Government Control.

The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad enjoys the distinction of being able to exhibit the original ticket purchased and paid for by *Commodore* George Dewey, from Washington to San Francisco, via the B. & O., when on his way to destroy the Spanish fleet in the Bay of Manila. That is unquestionably a great honor.

***

Perhaps some of the other railroads are jealous of it. If they are, there is a very good way for them to get even. Let them exhibit the *fac simile* of the passes

they give to members of Congress, when the latter go from Washington to their homes to look after their fences. That would make a fine contrast.

The school teachers could, in the future, read to the children a lesson on the American sailor who pays his way to go and fight the enemies of his country, and the American statesman who *deadheads* his to go and fight his political adversaries.

***

At any rate, it might be the means of training the young generation to face the new conditions that are developing so rapidly in the United States.

And they would be all the better prepared to deal with the trans-

portation problem, and to help carry out a new pact, in which the people are sure to figure as partners of the railroads, to a much greater extent than they have ever done heretofore.

***

If, on account of the pass abuse, or the rebate system, or for any other cause whatever, the railroads are unable to earn enough money to pay their legitimate expenses and a fair interest on their cost, they are sure to be sold out in the future, as they have been in the past. The next time they are sold out, the chances are they will be bought in by the Government.

It is difficult to say which horn of the dilemma would be the worst for the American people.

I am not in favor of Government ownership of the railroads. I believe the politicians already have too much to say in their management.

Holders of railroad securities would probably be benefited by being creditors of the Government instead of private companies.

But the experience of other countries, in having the railroads run by the Government, is not of a nature to encourage the attempt here.

To add eight or ten billions of dollars to the public debt of a nation is no small affair, even if that nation is the United States of America.

***

Australia owns all her railroads, and the Australian governments are groaning under the load.

Italy owns all her railroads. She tried to operate them, but the attempt was too much for her finances, and she was only too glad to lease them to private companies, in order to escape bankruptcy.

France owns part of her railroads, and they are a thorn in her side.

Germany owns practically all her railroads, and so does Russia. But in Germany and in Russia, as well as in France, England and wherever the government exercises control over the railroads, competition is unknown. Every railroad has an absolute monopoly on the traffic tributary to its lines.

From all that can be learned on the subject, those governments that have undertaken to own and operate their railroads would be glad enough to go out of *the* business, if it were not for the military question, which is paramount with them. Here, happily, the military question has not yet reached, and is not likely to ever reach, such a critical stage as that.

The ownership of the railroads by the Government would place fully a million men under political patronage. It is easy to see how irresistible would be the temptation, for either of the two great political parties, to use this powerful lever for all there was in it, either to acquire political control, or to perpetuate themselves in it.

To attempt to cure the evils of the railroad system through Government ownership, would be to jump from the frying pan into the fire.

To urge upon the American Government the absorption of the railroads, would be to tie a big millstone around the neck of Uncle Sam, and he is not in need of any at present.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Mother's Plea.

I HOPE the reader does not imagine, for an instant, that I am trying to solve the railroad problem, all by myself. I am trying nothing of the kind. Too big! Too many men, far better equipped than I am, have tried it and have failed. Thousands of others are daily engaged in the same task, and they do not seem to make much headway either.

From railroad presidents down to the flagmen at the crossings; from professors in universities down to curb-stone orators, everybody is trying to solve the rail-

road problem. The signs are not wanting that the people themselves are getting ready to take a hand at it, one of these days. The people are a little slow, sometimes, in grappling with big questions, but when they do, they never let go until the thing is settled and out of the way.

It is always well to remember that, if you grind a man down too much, you run the risk of putting a dangerous edge on him.

Every act of discrimination against the people constitutes a debt that will have to be paid some time. It may be postponed; it cannot be avoided. The longer it is put off, the bigger it will grow. When finally the day of settlement comes, the people are

pretty sure to have their rights, no matter who is hurt.

***

My only object is to call attention to the well-known fact that a law was enacted by Congress, some twelve years ago, for the express purpose of protecting the railroads against the politicians, and more specially for the purpose of protecting the American people against both. That law has been violated. It is being violated every day in the year. It is violated most by those who ought to violate it least. It has been violated by its makers, and by their successors and assigns. Instead of protecting the railroads, it bleeds the railroads. Instead of protecting the public, it oppresses the public.

If you could, dear reader, witness the scenes that take place, almost any day, in the general offices of any of the big railroads of the country, I have no doubt you would be greatly amused and interested.

You would see there some scenes so pathetic that they would bring tears to your eyes, in spite of yourself. And you would see others so comical and ludicrous that they would make you hold your sides with laughter. The assortment of requests for passes embraces pretty much all the situations imaginable under the sun, from the sublime to the ridiculous.

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One of the most interesting sights you would see there—and

by no means an uncommon one—would probably be that of some poor woman, whose scape-grace of a boy has run away from home, and is reported sick, or merely at the end of his rope, at some point along the line. Of course, mother-like, she thinks she must go to him at once. But she has not the money with which to buy a ticket, and nobody will give it to her.

She goes straight to the general office, to ask for a pass. A polite official tells her he has no authority to give her one. She pleads that she needs it so much. He tells her if he gave her a pass simply because she needs it, he could not refuse one to thousands of others who need it as

much as she does, or think they do. Still, she implores and she entreats, and then he uses the last argument; he tells her he cannot give her a pass, because it is contrary to the Interstate Commerce Law. That always settles it. The poor woman would rather let her boy die alone, away from her, than break the law. As she turns to go away, with a bleeding heart, sobs in her throat and tears streaming down her face, there stalks in some big, burly, red-nosed, blustering politician, who beckons to the clerk and says: "I want a pass to New York," and he gets it without a question.

CHAPTER XVII.

Skeleton in the Closet.

As carried on at present, the political pass system is an insult to the intelligence of the American people, and to their sense of fair play. Instead of being an instrument of national civilization, as it ought to be, the political pass has become an instrument of national degradation. Of all the numerous offsprings, born of the questionable relations between the politicians and the railroads, the political pass is the worst. She is the most wayward child of the whole family. If you investigate her pranks, you will

soon find that she is the real skeleton in the closet.

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If the political pass is to continue in existence, it should be legalized. The voters, in every state, should be the ones to decide, by their ballots, whether or not they desire their representatives to accept free passes of any kind from anybody. If they do, then it would be known to all that free passes are to form part of the emoluments of public office; and public men could all go to the circus, and occupy a seat in the front row, and they would not have to crawl under the canvas to get there, either.

***

Then, a political pass would become a public badge of honor and distinction, instead of being looked upon (as it is but too often now) as a livery of corruption, bribery and black-mail.

Then, the political pass would become one of the brightest and sweetest flowers in the garden of American civilization; now, it is the rankest kind of a weed. Instead of being the pride of the garden, it is its parasite. It rears its arrogant stalk over the heads of the more modest and useful plants, that try to eke out a miserable existence under its nefarious and baneful shadow. Its coarse leaves intercept the rays of the sun, and the vivifying drops of the rain and the morn-

ing dew. The poison of its roots contaminates everything that comes in contact with it. It has already permeated every artery of the body politic; even the judiciary are tainted with it.

***

I profess the deepest and most sincere respect for all judges on the American Bench. I believe that if the Constitution of the United States should ever be in danger, it would be sure to find a safe harbor of refuge in the heart of every judge of an American court; yet, how many judges pay their fare on the railroad?

***

I remember the case of a judge who actually refused a pass. He simply returned it with a polite

letter of thanks. You never saw such a commotion as was created by the receipt of that letter. It was passed from hand to hand as a great curiosity. Some said that judge must be a funny kind of a man; others said he must be a crank. For my part, I thought then, and I do think now, that he was a hero. Men like him deserve to have their names engraved in marble; their features should be cast in bronze; statues should be erected to them, that the whole world might know them, honor them, glorify them, for their courage and their manliness. It might serve as an example for others, and it would not cost much—there are so few of them.

The mere mention of the passes for the judges is sufficient to indicate what a field is here presented to the pen of a satirist. But, knowing that the judges, like the members of Congress, are, to a large extent, the victims of circumstances in regard to passes, I shall refrain from plunging the knife any deeper into the wound, or turning it round in the sore.

I shall content myself with the remark that, if the passes for the judges could be legalized, I have no doubt the judges themselves would feel much more at ease.

So would the pleaders.

***

In conclusion, I will say that, while I am not in favor of Government ownership of the rail-

roads, I am most decidedly in favor of any kind of Government control that will secure equal rights and equal privileges, on the American railroads, for every man, woman and child in the United States.

How I Got Acquainted with the Gendarmes.

A TRANSPORTATION EPISODE.

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I.

On an Errand of Friendship.

They do these things differently in France.

On a hot July afternoon of the year 1871, I started from Marseilles for the mountains, on an errand of friendship. An old schoolmate, who, fifteen years before, had come to America to seek his fortune, like myself, and had never gone back, had entrusted me, before I left Chicago, with a number of presents for his brothers and sisters, and many messages of love for his widowed mother.

His people lived seventy-five or

eighty miles northward, on the French side of the Alps, and the only way to get there was by diligence.

The diligence passed every day in front of the residence of the relative with whom I was staying, but the resumption of travel was so great, after the close of the Franco-Prussian War, that I found it impossible to get a seat in it, without retaining one at the head office several days in advance. Accordingly, I went there, secured a seat, and paid one-half of the fare down, as requested by the man in charge, who stated that the balance would be collected on the way by the conductor himself.

The coach came along in due

time. I took my seat in the coupé, provided with a substantial lunch of cold fowl, SAUCISSON D'ARLES, fruit, cakes and a bottle of wine; for it was to be a ten hours' journey, without a stop, except long enough to change horses at regular relays along the route.

II.

Travel by Diligence.

The diligence was drawn by three powerful horses, driven abreast. It was divided into four compartments—the coupé in front, with seats for three; the rotonde behind, with room for six; the impériale on top, in front, with accommodations for three more, besides the conductor and postilion. The space back of this was reserved for baggage and an occasional bag of game, which the conductor generally managed to smuggle into Marseilles, without paying the octroi.

The only other occupant of the

coupé, with me, was a corpulent man of about forty—a commercial traveler in light hardware—with whom I tried to enter into conversation, but who did not prove very communicative. In fact, from the moment I told him I hailed from America, he seemed to regard me with decided suspicion. We were then just after the fall of the Commune, and he may have taken me for a Communist, sailing under false colors. I tried to propitiate him by sharing my lunch with him, and I noticed that he got away with the best part of the SAUCISSON and most of the wine. After that, he went to sleep, or pretended to, and I enjoyed myself looking out of the window.

The three big horses, covered with foam, were galloping at the top of their speed, stimulated thereto by the music of their bells and the cracking of the whip, which the postilion was handling, in an artistic manner, over their backs, accompanying each stroke with an expletive of his own, in his flowery provençal.

The road was broad, hard and smooth. It would have seemed perfect, but for the fine dust which covered everything alongside of it, and the whiteness of which, under the glare of the southern sun, was almost unendurable to the naked eye.

The day was intensely hot, as days usually are in that part of the country, and at that season of the year.

III.

I Drink Some Water.

At eight o'clock in the evening, we reached Sisteron, a smart little town at the confluence of the Rivers Buech and Durance, on the dividing line between Provence and Dauphiné. Here my unsociable companion left me, and I had thence the coupé to myself, for the rest of the journey.

The air had become heavy and oppressive; the heat was almost stifling. While we were changing horses, I noticed, across the esplanade, people sitting round little tables, in front of the cafés, sipping light liqueurs and iced

drinks. Never in my life did I feel so strongly tempted to imitate them. But this would have meant the loss of a day, because the diligence would not have waited one minute for me, of course. However, nearby, a high fountain was pouring water from a dozen pipes into an immense stone basin. In an instant, I was bending down over that basin and quenching my thirst with great relish. Great heavens! I have been sorry for it to this day. Such stale, sickening water I had never tasted before, and hope never to again. I went back to my seat, a sad and dejected man.

With fresh horses and a new driver, we resumed our race towards the mountains. Soon night

came, but the heat was still intense. It was not until midnight, when we had reached higher grades, that I experienced any relief at all.

The night, too, had a peculiar appearance. There was not a breath of air nor a cloud; myriads of stars were twinkling in the skies, and yet, in front of me, the space was as black as ink. Not a sound was to be heard, save the galloping of the horses, the cracking of the whip, and the urging of the driver.

IV.

Transportation at Reduced Rates.

Shortly after two o'clock in the morning, we reached the point where I was to get off. The conductor was down from his perch, the moment the horses stopped. Opening the portière rather roughly, he called to me to alight, and started off for the postoffice, across the square, with the mail-bag in his hand, reappeared almost immediately with another bag, and ran back to the road again, but further down, at a triangle from the point where he had left us. The horses had been changed, the coach met him down the

way, and, in a twinkling, they had turned the corner and were out of sight.

Now, the conductor had never collected the balance of my fare; in fact, he had never paid the slightest attention to me at all. There I stood, in the dark, with my bundles on the ground, my pocket-book in my hand, ready to pay him, and he was gone.

After a moment's reflection, I consoled myself with the thought that, perhaps, that was a way they had in France, and I was glad that, if the journey had not been very pleasant, at least I had had a ride in a diligence at reduced rates. Picking up my parcels, I walked towards the postoffice, where I saw a dim

light burning. Here, I was allowed to leave my baggage, until I could send for it in the morning. There was no hotel in the little town; therefore, I gladly accepted the offer of the postmaster to help myself to a chair, in which I settled down, after lighting a cigar, to wait patiently for daylight.

V.

A Mountain Home.

The sun is up early in July. By three o'clock, I was able to pick my way up the side of the mountain, towards the little hamlet, about three miles away, among the vines, where the family of my friend resided. I reached there by the time the men where getting ready to go to the fields. They have to work early and late too, on those barren hills, to keep the wolf from the door.

Although my visit was not entirely unexpected, my arrival created considerable stir at the farm-house, nevertheless. The good

old mother, with bent frame, wrinkled face, and hair white as snow, shed tears of joy over me, as if I had been her own beloved boy. I cannot now recall all the peculiar questions she asked me about him. They were such as only a mother's love could prompt. I answered them as well as I could, and I fear I stretched the truth once or twice, in my desire to answer them to her satisfaction; but who could have had the heart to detract from her happiness, on such an occasion?

The whole family pressed round me, eager to express their joy, and vying with one another, in their efforts to make me comfortable.

Presently, the neighbors took a hand in it also. Before the sun went down that day, I was on the best of terms with every man, woman and child in the little hamlet. Each succeeding day only served to enlarge the circle of my new friends and acquaintances.

One poor mother, who had a son in Panama, came to me with tears in her eyes, and begged me piteously to call on him on my return to America, and tell him to write her a letter and send her some money. A sturdy mountaineer, as honest and guileless as a child, after many ludicrous apologies, charged me with a similar errand for his son, who was in Egypt. At this, one of the peas-

ants timidly remarked that perhaps the two young men were not near enough one another to make it convenient for me to call on both; whereupon another one positively asserted that Panama and Egypt, being both outside of France, must necessarily lie in the same direction, which seemed to settle the case definitely, at least so far as they were concerned.

VI.

The Blues are Coming.

On the morning of the third day of my visit, I was standing in front of the house, under an old walnut tree, surrounded by a dozen or so of my new friends, greatly enjoying the quaintness and simplicity of their conversation, when a young mountaineer suddenly burst into our midst. Looking round cautiously, he raised his forefinger to his lips, and whispered these words: "The Blues are coming." Then he disappeared as silently and swiftly as he had come.

The charm of our conversation

was broken instantly. The men looked at one another inquisitively; the women betrayed signs of fear, and gathered the young ones more closely around them. My venerable hostess turned very pale; great anguish was depicted on her countenance, as her eyes rested on her youngest boy, a delicate-looking lad of nineteen or twenty, who, all at once, blushed with shame and appeared to be in unspeakable misery.

The Blues were coming. It is singular how these mountaineers find it out, but they seldom fail to be warned in advance of the approach of the gendarmes. [They call them "the Blues" on account of their blue uniform.]

The Blues were coming, sure

enough, for, before we had had time to speculate on the event, they were upon us—two in number—at the full gallop of their great bay horses; and we were not a little surprised to see them pull up suddenly, and dismount right at our feet.

VII.

A Mother's Heart.

The good lady instinctively threw her arms round her boy's neck, as if to protect him. The young man looked scared enough to sink under ground. It appears, as I learned subsequently, that he had run away from home some time before, to see the world for himself, and, after a good deal of hardship, had finally secured a position in a hotel at Avignon; but, becoming dissatisfied, he had left his place rather abruptly and returned home; not, however, before some sharp words had passed between himself and the

proprietor, as well as the proprietor's wife.

He had only been home a few days, when the gendarmes suddenly appeared at the door, and, with many apologies for having to perform an unpleasant duty, immediately proceeded to ransack the house from cellar to garret, in search of a plain gold ring and one or two more trinkets of insignificant value, which were said to have been missed at the hotel after his departure, and which the landlady accused him of having stolen.

Of course, the officers found nothing, although they made the closest search in every part of the house; ripping the beds open with their sabres, emptying the

drawers on the floors, scattering the old family linen, which had not been unfolded for years, and leaving everything in the wildest disorder and confusion.

While all this was going on, the poor mother was undergoing the torments of agony, for fear the missing objects might be found in her house, and her boy be proved a thief. She told me afterwards that the shame which came over her, on that terrible occasion, could never fade from her heart, and would accompany her to the grave.

No wonder the poor soul felt a pang of terror when the Blues halted in front of her door a second time, and so soon, too, after their first and unwelcome visit.

VIII.

I Get in Trouble.

However, their business was not with her this time. The one in command, a brigadier, threw the reins of his horse to his companion, and, advancing towards me, and calling me by my name, said, very politely: "It seems you did not pay your fare, on the diligence from Marseilles, the other day."

It was now my turn to blush. I tried to explain the case to him as calmly as I could; but, somehow, I first hesitated, then stammered, and finally got beautifully tangled up. The presence of all

those new friends of mine, with their eyes riveted on me, made me nervous, too, while the scrutinizing look of the gendarmes, with their implied reflections on my honesty, made my blood tingle with indignation.

My excitement increased with the fancy that the Blues were enjoying my confusion, as they stood there staring at me, with cocked hats, like generals on parade, swallow-tail coats lined with red, cords and tassels dangling all over their breasts and shoulders, and with high-top boots and clinking spurs, and big swords hanging by their sides, to say nothing of a brace of pistols and a carbine resting in their holsters on each saddle; whilst the

horses themselves—big, fat and sleek—seemed to realize their own importance, and tried to look as imposing as their masters.

And what was all this indignity heaped upon me for? Because a stupid conductor had failed to ask me for the fare, which I was only too willing and ready to pay. I happened to think, at the moment, how many times, during my ups and downs in America, I had deadheaded my way on freight trains, and for longer distances than that, too, and the president of the railroad had never taken the trouble to dispatch living arsenals on horseback after me to collect the fare.

IX.

The Brigadier.

What did the diligence people mean, anyway? Did they charge me with a desire to rob them? Did they suppose that a man coming from America was not able to pay his fare? On the impulse of the moment, I put my hand in my pocket, and foolishly pulled out a handful of gold, which I flourished, with much conceit, before the eyes of the astonished peasants. Doubtless, in my agitation, I might have kept on in this way, and made myself still more ridiculous, had I not just then caught sight of the

brigadier's countenance. There was such a merry twinkle in his eye, and such a hearty, good-natured smile overspreading all his features, that my irritation vanished instantly, like mist before the rays of the sun.

With kind words and affable manners, he came graciously to my rescue, explaining how the conductor, having discovered his mistake, had requested the gendarmerie to look me up, and ask me for the amount; a request, he said, which he was not at liberty to disregard. He advised me, however, to wait until I went to the city, when I could pay the money at headquarters myself, and, by the same occasion, enter a complaint against the blundering conductor.

The brigadier was a fine-looking fellow, of good manners and genial disposition. He readily conquered my sympathy, as well as my gratitude, for helping me out of a situation which, with a less accommodating officer, might have involved me into no end of trouble.

The unpleasantness having been all explained away, I shook hands very heartily with the two officers; then all my country friends shook hands with me, and congratulated me, under their breath, on my narrow escape.

X.

Toasting Monsieur L'Américain.

My worthy old lady friend was so overjoyed, when we assured her it was all right, that she forgot how terribly the Blues had just frightened her, for the second time, and insisted that Monsieur le Brigadier and Monsieur le Gendarme must accept some refreshments. The latter had not the least objection. Accordingly, a table was spread under the big tree, and the whole party sat down to a regular peasants' lunch. Of course, the best cask in the cellar had to be tapped for the occasion. A big brown pitcher,

filled to the brim with a light-colored, but treacherous, sour wine, was soon passing round, from hand to hand, and was kept going pretty lively, too; for the black rye bread, the cheese, made of goat's milk, and the delicious pistaches (paper-shell almonds), were rather dry, and required to be washed down with frequent draughts.

The result was that, in an incredible short space of time, everybody was in high glee. The brigadier, with perfect gallantry, was drinking the health of our venerable hostess, the gendarme was seconding the motion, I was toasting the brigadier, and the peasants, in a body, were repeatedly emptying their glasses to Monsieur l'Américain.

Finally, our little picnic came to an end, amid general happiness and good-will all around. The brigadier kindly invited me to dine with him the next day, at his barracks, in the chief town of the Canton, only a few miles away. He confided to me, with commendable pride, that his wife was an accomplished cook, a "cordon bleu," he called her. I gladly accepted his invitation, and was on hand at the appointed hour. I found he had not at all overestimated the culinary abilities of his good wife. The dinner was thoroughly enjoyable, and their society still more so.

XI.

Excursions with the Gendarmes.

After this, my relations with the jolly chief and his little brigade of four men, became quite intimate. They were good enough to put a horse at my disposal; and I had the pleasure of accompanying them, on several of their rounds, throughout the district, which was a pretty large one, comprising, as it did, over a dozen small villages and hamlets, some of them perched away up on the mountain peaks.

Our excursions generally wound up at some prosperous farm-house, or at the mayor's, or the curé's;

but, wherever we stopped, we were sure to be treated to the best of everything. The people seemed to think that nothing was too good for the gendarmes. The poor feared them, the rich respected them, and everybody looked upon them as the very embodiment of order, good government and law.

For my part, I could not see that their presence was at all necessary, to preserve the public peace; for, a more orderly, honest, frugal and industrious population, it would be difficult to find anywhere in the world. It even seemed to me that they used their great influence, over the inhabitants, a little too often for the purpose of getting at the good things in the larder, by

scaring them unnecessarily, and for trifling things, as I had occasion to witness in several cases, besides my own.

XII.

I Talk Politics, Unfortunately.

Be that as it may, between the family of my schoolmate, the kind-hearted peasants and the obliging officers, my stay in the mountains was being made as pleasant as possible. The brigadier himself was a most charming companion. I never tired of listening to his stirring narratives of his experiences during the Franco-German war; for he had been all through the campaign. My intercourse with him was marked with perfect cordiality and good-fellowship until, in an evil hour, we talked politics. It

was in the only café of the town, and in the presence of a large crowd, for the place. I can't understand what ill wind impelled him. He called on me to explain, for the benefit of the audience, how political campaigns are carried on in America. I demurred; he pressed me until finally I consented to tell them, the best way I could, about the American way of electing a president; dwelling, as I went on, on the beauties of a republican form of government, where all men are equal, and where the chief magistrate is only the first servant of the nation. I noticed that my hearers acted somewhat strangely, looking at one another, then at the brigadier, then at me, in a sort

of constraint. Turning to the brigadier, I was startled to see the expression of his face; it was fairly green with suppressed anger.

He was an enthusiastic Bonapartist, and I had been ignorant of it until that very minute!

XIII.

It is Different in France.

I was grieved, beyond expression, at my lack of perspicacity in not discovering his politics before.

I endeavored to correct my mistake. I tried to soothe the fierce political passion I had stirred up in his breast. I attempted to turn the whole thing into a joke. All in vain. His face was livid. His eyes were bloodshot.

I called for more wine, and urged him to join in with the rest of the crowd. He did not even notice my request.

Instinctively, I recalled, in my

mind, my experiences during some of the political campaigns in America, in which I had taken part more than once. I thought of the political adversaries abusing one another like thieves; picking each other to pieces on the hustings; then exchanging a chew of tobacco, or going out to take a drink together, like old friends.

"Truly," said I to myself, "whether in transportation or in politics, they do these things differently in France."

XIV.

I Take My Leave.

The situation had now become painful all around.

Consequently, I took my leave, as soon as I could decently do so; not, however, without extending my hand to the brigadier, as usual. But, whether inadvertently, or otherwise, he failed to grasp it, and I went away much chagrined.

I left the country a few days afterwards. Before going, I called on him, and offered an earnest apology for any involuntary offense I might have given him, as well as my heartiest thanks for

the many favors I had received at his hands. On parting, I offered him my hand again. After a painful effort on his part, he took it, and even tried to smile as he returned my adieux. But it was neither the grasp nor the smile of old. The cloud was too heavy; it could not be lifted.

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After that, I was very careful not to talk politics, for one thing, and to always pay my fare, for another—until I returned to America, of course.